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RONALD H. BAYES

AGES AND JOURNEYS

with an introduction
by
EDWARD F.
JAMES

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CAGES AND JOURNEYS

by

RONALD H. BAYES

with an introduction by

EDWARD F. JAMES

1964

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To
JOHN MERRIFIELD
and
DAVID L. WRIGHT

*—two kind and faithful
friends*

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

Verse:

Dust and Desire, 1960
introduction by Vic Flack

Dust and Desire, 1962
introduction by William Carlos Williams

Paint the Window Purple, 1963
in collaboration with Marvin Saltzman



For the stage:

Cum Along, Lad! — an Evening with Ezra Pound, 1963

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R.H.B.
La Grande, Oregon
1963



Cover portrait by Marvin Saltzman

THE NEW POETRY OF RONALD H. BAYES: AN INTRODUCTION

by

EDWARD F. JAMES

Before one can make an objective statement as to whether or not a given work is "good poetry", it would seem, one must first deal with the larger question upon which so much has been already written: What is poetry?

To answer that "poetry is magic", "poetry is expression", "poetry is a social instrument of thus and thus a nature" seems certainly either to beg the question of definition entirely, and therewith to preclude anything more than a recording of purely subjective reaction, or to make a comment more properly historical or sociological or psychological in import than aesthetic.

If one prescinds, then, from considerations either of poet—or reader-psychology or of sociological and historical perspectives—all of which may be very interesting in their own right, but scarcely productive of ultimate aesthetic evaluation—one must, it may be conceded, consider poetry as a specification of the *langue*, to use the terms of DeSaussure in his *Cours de Linguistique Generale*.

It seems further necessary to distinguish poetry as language from other principal classifiable types of discourse. Most modern specialists in these matters are in

some measure in agreement that three general areas of discourse are, while overlapping, definable in terms of their ends: one speaks properly, it is said, of "informative discourse", discourse which sets forth facts, as in the physics textbook; one speaks also of "emotive-dynamic discourse" or "affective discourse", which is the use of language for the purpose of organizing or directing opinion or of eliciting action. One discriminates finally a further specification of the *langue* as "aesthetic discourse", or "poetry".

Poetry appears to differ from the other linguistic conformations in this: that while the ends of other kinds of discourse are instrumental and lie outside themselves, the value of the poetic is within itself—*intrinsic* and *inhering*. The very nature of the linguistic is that it is realized in a medium of sounds (which may be reduced to graphic surrogates), and of those sounds structured and relating, by convention, to meaning. *L'objet linguistique*, whatever its end, always involves the selection of one sound and not another, of one meaning and not another. But in the poetic use of language, we have the presentation of language calling attention to itself, of language for its own sake, to be appreciated in and for itself; hence, the structuring of elements of sound and elements of meaning in relation to each other assumes an importance not observable in other types of language. We no longer have language for the sake of meaning alone (where phonetic patterning is almost unimportant as a consideration); we do not, we take it, have sound structured for its own sake, since the nature of the *signe*, a social product, indicates that intensional and extensional meanings are inherent. Music alone is structured sound. In poetry, ideally, we have a most delicate balancing and interplay of relations between sounds and meanings: this

relationship constitutes the "form" of poetry, and the success of that form—and the answer to the question: "Is this a good poem?"—may be determined by the success of the interplay and interrelationship and by their coherence, taken as intrinsically valuable.

When Ronald Bayes' first volume of poetry, *Dust and Desire*, appeared in 1960, Dr. Alvin R. Kaiser of Eastern Oregon College noted that there was in Bayes' work "a depth of meaning," and that whether one read "by sunlight or candlelight, the dartlings . . . flash now blue, now green, now red, now crystal white." In Dr. Kaiser's comment was apparent the recognition, well-founded, of the successful reinforcement of meaning microstructures, the coherence of which is in part responsible for what may be called Bayes' "style," in each macrostructural unit. What was true of Bayes' work then is as characteristic—or, it may be ventured, even more characteristic—now, three years later, in *Cages and Journeys*, his second volume: one finds once again new attainments in depths and levels of meaning.

Yet it is not merely Bayes' ability as an architect of interrelationships of meanings that is remarkable. Bayes' poetry is not a "poetry of message," and one seriously doubts if the so-called "poetry of message" is not, very often, at least in terms of what has been remarked upon above, some other thing than poetry. It is not alone Bayes' extraordinary talent at handling that so artistically essential device of contrast that is noteworthy. (Contrast, which bears out the basic design of selectivity of similarities and differences, is implicit at a very primary stratum of *langue* specification; it is of interest to note that Professor Cleanth Brooks has avowed that paradox—a kind of contrast—is the "language of poetry"). It is not even Bayes' sensitivity to sound structure and

to its arrangement in a unified system that marks his work as extraordinary. It is all of these—and more.

The ultimate success of this young writer lies in his ability to deal with the ultimate structural form: it is Bayes' keen comprehension of the interplay of *all* the elements of the *langue*, and his elegant conformation of all of them into superbly integrated unitary designs, that makes *Cages and Journeys* a more-than-worthy sequel to *Dust and Desire*, and a volume for the discriminating and thoughtful and mature reader.

Such a reader will return, not once, but many times, to this little volume. If one may speak metaphorically, he will return often to watch the interplay of new levels of sound patterns and new systems of ironies, paradoxes, contrasts, and of resolutions of antitheses and contrasts, meanings which were, in his first reading, perhaps, only vaguely intuited. And he will return many times more to see broader patterning reshape themselves.

To say this is to describe the artistic truly realized. And than this . . . there can be no better recommendation.

Catholic University of America
Washington, D.C.
November 1962

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JOURNEYS

*When a man thinketh on anything whatsoever, his next
thought after, is not altogether so
casual as it seems to be*

—THOMAS HOBBES

AUTUMN

(a garland for S.T.T., 1942-60)

How far the clouds have moved ! The dying moon
Upon our fading, simple garden's done its last—
We can but guess the meaning of the cry:
O wounded bird still sheltering the brood
Shelter our hearts.

Friendships are gone or fragmented indeed
Like mercury spilt out the cautious tube—
The violets of remembrance dead. "This is for good."
Sweet bird, still comforting the brood
Let tent thy wings.

Cry "kru", sing you, drencht hen, alas no pheonix—
Silver from crimson hearts, diamonds from brass
Still warm, though dark the feathers—
If life last
Be you our god.

BUT TO TELL THE TRUTH

As for flavor
It's hard to best
A rib
Said my butcher to
Me
And I thought about
Eve.

GOING SOUTH

They'd made the start South from North Washington,
Passed through Walla Walla,
Milton-Freewater,
I joining there the bus-load,
And God, but they were without.

So little !

Blankets and baskets and the Greyhound creaking
Baskets and blankets and a cardboard box
Glasses and rubber boots
Knotted brown hands
And everything and hope on board, in short.

Up and down hills:

Weston, Athena, Pendleton,
And I recall somewhere between he looked at her,
Turning half-round his seventy-wintered and rheumatic
head
And thrilling spastic-like, jerking words because of
February cold,
To California-or-bust, his partner, wife, said
"Mother, I can feel it.
It's getting warmer already."
Said, "We're in Oregon now, you know.
It's quite a difference."

I couldn't wince,

Nor yet could choose to ponder on the heartbrown
moment

With twelve above outside and cold feet, too.

I knew it wasn't really getting warmer,

Mountains ahead and open land with gusts of wind soon
up

The Columbia Gorge to the right; the Bend southmountain country

Ditto.

"God!" I said inside

"How can they prop this poor act up—

This poor pretence at hope."

But they had to and they knew and I knew and I wanted
with them.

Wanted with . . .

But knew it wasn't getting any warmer,

Except, perhaps,

The region of the heart.

OFF ST. GEORGE'S BAY: BERMUDA

April

Quiet but for humming
of an ocean-going tug
somewhere near;
 and a mile of azure motion
 calm as lotus:
lovely under a Bright growing excited flowers
St. George's is warm, too, with white, pink-washed
cottages; coral-cut, half-mile across the sound they
glitter and flower above where
the still *Arosa Star* stays docked.

And the water skiers not *yet* at their play,
nor swimmers
—it's a little chilly in, a little bit too early;
this is the selfish, glorious, secret time
for the lone looker
to lave in beauty
and love the stillness,
lording it on his own,
knowing the need to believe in some good
not quite out of this moment;
having it filled.

IRELAND IN RETROSPECT

MEMO: *Irish Sea*

Wolfgang talked to
Monolingual me on the cold
Deck at dawn and sleepless four
In German:
The truest compliment
I ever had.

MEMO: *Entering Dublin*

“I fear such men,”
Wolfgang kept repeating
Of the ugly hansom cabbie
Who said “One Dollar,”
’Stead of asking shillings.

MEMO: *Off O'Connell Street*

Loved Ireland, but
Oh, I shall always remember
The first sound off the boat
... Sound of horses' hooves on pavement
And the echo;
How a first it made me ill,
And later at breakfast in a B & B house,
Dingy, second floor, over eggs
Again outside the
Clop
Clop
And my fear inside—
Though later I came to love Dublin
Fear, somehow, inside.

MEMO: *Buswell's Hotel the Last Morning*

Silent, silent and glum the breakfast room,
So grey the eggspot orang'd into life
Upon the tablecloth,
Advancing with more courage than
The serving girl.

ADVICE TO A GOOD STUDENT

Aye !
Proceed
Gently
And be subtle.
Go the long journey also
Into the eye of I.

FOR JORGEN KRUHOFFER

The old man
Who young
The same trip
Daily made
Into the Japanese garden
Down the shaded path
To the lake
To have speech with the golden-scaled fish
 on *why* and *WHY*
Long in my bothered dreams
 leads me
 leads me
 land to land to land;
And to each far lake we go
To glimpse ripple,
Gilt flash against blue,
To fathom the whole if we may have a word.
.
And I watch the palsied head,
 untiring eyes,
 that withered, pointing hand,
Always
My only companions
Land to land.

(Sondrestromfjord, 1958)

GREENLANDERS

(for George Montague-St. John)

*" . . . There was now no armour, glittering in the forest glades,
no embroidered feet on the greensward; the cream
and dappled unicorns had fled . . . "*

—EVELYN WAUGH

The fox and ptarmigan turn white
Able beyond our brightest means
To cope with enemies below;
Above by unseen by unseens.

Not Eskimo, not caribou,
Nor contractor's border-pushing men
Can carry safety quite inside—
Yet twice a year be born again.

The push of bluster, keen of fear,
Stomach's contraction at a start
Still plague the grasper and the hope,
Sully ambition, pride, and heart.

Until suffice us wild grapes,
Search for the pod of scrag and weed,
Not one (and notwithstanding size)
Dare boast, bark, strut, or plead.

AND O RARE SUN

Climbing, climbing
Heaving into the west
Over the Highlands
Away from Scotland
Mountains below, snow and majesty;
On over the great cold
Waters past the islands.
Onward
To ice and west and land,

Up-pull, cloudshift
Sun warm
Going
In seconds
Grey mist
Grey clouds
Horizon white
The west ahead,
The north and O rare Sun.

Fancy the whitecaps, all
Meaningless,
Below and eye-definite,

See the North Sea
Stretching for ever;
Here is Now
And never.

ROAD SCENE

I. REYKJAVIK FROM THINGVELLIR

(*for E.F.J.*)

One yard tall
Across the gravel
Trailing the bovine line
The tiny herdsman
Swinging along
To bounce in silent singing
Lingerish nightfall;
Huge in the moment and relaxed
Jersey Guernsey Swiss
Some twenty

trainline

toward

The yellow barn-and-house
Wherfrom the eyes of reason
(Father, brother)
Watch
Both warm and calculating
Readied for the profit end, yet
Enjoying the heart a little
Of this affair.

My heart's-eye hero
Knows the goodness of
The green and moment;

Knows that even glorious, great Reykjavik
Has no Now like this, nor has had
When-so-ever,
And onward presses brown and spotted cows
To fodder.

Boy in sunfall time—
I from a distance play the ghost;
Observe the universal hope as
Viking-dad prepares the manger,
Host.

Not even this in town
Not even in the mighty Reykjavik.

ROAD SCENE

II. KEFLAVIK TO HAFNAFJORDUR

Pillarclouds
And a plane
And the plane does not belong,
Even sheep wool on the fence
Is out of place;
Tedious, the plainwood church
Paralleling spire to door,
A mock security, secures more
Through white paint.

Looks like four-bottomed Bunion-plows
Went through the lava here;
Northward the stacked rock guides the way for ghosts,
And west—cold lava, far as eye can see
Promiscuously stretching into distance.

The bay by Keflavik today's
Whelped blue as new sky !

Gunnar, turned back to green
And burnt, with Njal.
Often we turn back, lots of us.
Remark the houses, walls, lava, knolls,
Sea, cloud, and rock.
Note the white walls and houses in pastels,
But most
The green, green, green.

And I remember that other airport
I remember a polka
And that I loved you.

Now each in maze muddled and oh-so-adjusting
And we no longer love . . . why kid ? And I am not
Even jealous in wild imaginings.

A few people
A few more people
Now we move . . . you move . . . I move . . . from progress
To progress
Unlove to unlove
Anticipating only departures.

PARALLELS: UMAPINE

HAVE YOU EVER SEEN ?

Have you ever seen a real beautiful
Hurt
Bird
That looked calm, possessed, unruffled,
So the wound surprised
You when you found it somehow though you knew
It would not stay still unless it had to
—And feeling it the wound hurt you
Yet you wisht you could somehow
Take it from the bird,
For which already you had the feeling—love,
And tears at the ready at the ready
On the quick assembly line
And you knew that its dying
Or its getting well would free the bird:
Away flying
Would be the last you'd love of that, see

But you can't just

TO SEE WHAT HE COULD SEE

(Variation on a bare theme)

The chapter ends
And I lay down the book:
I think I'll cogitate on it a while
And leave it shut
Unless I change my mind.

I've read and felt
But somehow lately note
Heroes both passionate and moved by rote
Leave me unmoved—
Perhaps my lack of depth.

And yet I've felt
The face of hate, the farce of love,
And only empathize these days with bears
The which have seen
Burnt land beyond the hill.

CAGES

... being designed to acquaint the reader with
Messrs James Purser, Morill Baker, and

J. Davis Hawk

A cage went in search of a bird

—KAFKA

THREE CORNER CONVERSATION WITH NOBODY LISTENING

I (*Morill Baker*)

Cogitate on time, city, people,
Wonder of parts far and foreign
As in those parts
The musing counterparts ply equal wistfulness
And somewhat-wanderlust
Before their empty bankbooks
And warm fires.

II (*James Purser*)

Usually planning's cheap;
Sponges both time and mind,
Cannot cause friction, if unconfided:
Up raises hell when
Tongue and mind dare roam out
Both in one company.

III (*J. Davis Hawk*)

Ah, then ! What things so far we cogitate upon !
La, la-la, la, la !
The wench ?
She is dead, unh ?
That's just a small some !
Practical ! Tangible !

HAWK IN A FINANCE SCHOOL GARDEN

Let me be exquisitely melancholy
Amidst fountains and youth.
In concrete courtyards time enough for
Current truth.

Let me enjoy the taste and texture—flower and fruit—
A day—
Until the Market
And the CIO
Call me away.

THE ROMANTIC PORTRAITURE OF DAVIS HAWK

"We are wrong in speaking of a bad choice in love since whenever there is a choice it can only be bad."

—MARCEL PROUST

I. STUDLEY FAGEN, GENTLEMAN OFFICER

OOOOeeeeeeeoooooooo

Yez he still had the animal's ear whose vocab is in
The pitch

OOOOeeeeeeeoooooooooooo

Not the context.

II. GLANDA MULTIMUCH, GIRL KLEPTO

"And fighting a fever
Has no time to think"
Still she had an obsession
For fountain-pens.

HAWK PONDERS PUBLIC OPINION

And Priam
Had a daughter
Enlightened and refined
Who only made the history books
After she
Concubined.

JAMES PURSER'S COMPLAINTS

I (To Her)

Because I come
So far
So fast
So unreciprocally believed—
So damned impossible—
But so in love
Demanding only you,
You give me definition
By omitting,
Like ashamed.

II (*To Himself*)

And I told her
Of eyelid and cheekbone
She half awake
And it meant
Nothing
(to her).

PURSER ON LOCKS

A dozen damning times
I have stumbled up the stairway
Toward your heart !
The lock was there,
A hasp, not combination;
What good would it have done
To fumble,
Ring,
Shout,
Knock ?

Feeling
my
way
down
Hand on chilled brick,
Out and off a foggy
Or a rainwet street I start . . .
dear god why do I never learn
even fools are said at last to
i'm no locksmith.

At least the insulation keeps it silent on the inside
And you sleep
Without my interference:
This is good.

PURSER'S POEM

*"...Necessarily vain, for love cannot be compelled,
and the effort to compel it only alienates it
still further . . ."*

—MILTON HINDUS

I would cry for you
Because I love
 but
Impotence also
Reaches the tear glands.

Helpfulness
Mindmirrored
Memos
The heart.

THE NEW AMSTERDAM CAPITULATION
OF JAMES PURSER

Down came the rack
Down came
Wonder
Understanding and
 cut
 deep—

A vacuum.
The slash !
Yet learn !
Unpain and unbelief
Are not narcotics.

Blue wrack.
Trail back. Sparrow's song.
These I followed to the end
(And I loved you),
To the end
And the pain
Went i
 n
 beyond
These defences
With your kind word (swallow and dove)
And weak wind-up cheekbrush . . .
In a tawdry hotel room.

MORILL BAKER'S LOVE POEM

We did not regain
But built anew.
On the blue lake
A finer villa with
Cleaner columns,
And each successive sunrise
As you slept
I, barefooted,
In the dawn
Saw after the proper Sun
And his rising—
Loathed disturbing
Those brown lashes,
Eyelids
Shading eyes with amber depths
Painful as undefined beauty
Only
Can be.

Variegated blooms
Blew in the dawnrush breeze
NEW !
Not the new of northern seascape
Escape,
NEW !
NEW !—and the heart did wake.

Not "gain again"—
The younger fool asked that—
NEW is eternal !
New moment's love is apex and alp
Painting and poem—
The dead are dead !
And love is the last and oh azure
Second I see you.

BAKER'S LAMENT

*"She's dead and all which die,
To their first Elements resolve;
And we were mutual Elements to us,
And made of one another."*

—JOHN DONNE

Dead
Paps and all
The dainty body and its dove light breasts
The laughing heart and grace and
Un-self plans
—Heart, soul, guts,
And too my mind's heart's glory
And my love.
En route to dung.

My love.
In crash of steel (alas ! such unlust force !)—
Steel.
But maggots
Carry all elections.

Four thousand miles and a month
Away I learn by mail.

I'd cry in your halfblond hair if I but could.

I love your image—
Stronger dead than I am live . . .
But cannot muster tears . . .

And has it come to this,
My beauty ?

BAKER'S MEMORY

Brown hair.
I remember.
First.
Last time I saw you.
Then, then (I mean PAST), *then*.
Intense.
Melancholy is all.
Is you.
Now in my mind.
My heart.
Deep eyes.
Danger in munitions.
Afloat or ashore.
Death in life.
As love.
Lovely one.
Wild faun.
Wild heart.
Frightened hart.
Wild wind in black silk.
Brown hair.
Through forests.
I running.
I now.
Across sand yellow.
Time past.
Still
Long-
ing

BAKER'S OPTIMISTIC AESTHETIC RENEWED

The halo of hope is around
My dream
And I do not care for the
Somehow
Of the expedient.

You, within the halo
A variable,
I love,
But that is of little moment
Really:

That I've a core to
Worship
And to pray to, pure aesthetic—
Is the point !

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